

Understanding Yourself and Others: the MBTI

Pioneering psychiatrist [Carl Jung](#) developed psychological personality types based on four functions (**F**eeling, **T**hinking, **N**tuition and **S**ensing) and two attitudes (**E**xtraversion and **I**ntroversion). Two more attitudes (**J**udging and **P**erceiving) were added by Katherine Briggs who, with her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers, developed an instrument to identify these Jungian types. The shared vision of these two women was “to enable individuals to grow through an understanding and appreciation of individual differences in healthy personality and to enhance harmony and productivity among diverse groups.” Their work produced the most widely used instrument of its kind in the world, the *Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)*®.



In the *MBTI*®, an individual is assigned a type composed of four letters--two each of the four attitudes (**E**xtraversion or **I**ntroversion and **J**udging or **P**erceiving) and the four functions (**F**eeling or **T**hinking and intuition or **S**ensing). The names of these eight attitudes and functions are easily confused with common English words; so don't take them literally. They don't necessarily mean what we expect them to mean:



There are therefore a total of 16 4-letter combinations that represent something basic about one's personality. Call it *psychological type*. Actually, we all have the potential to use all the attitudes and functions in any combination, but those represented by our psychological type are assumed to be “hard-wired.”

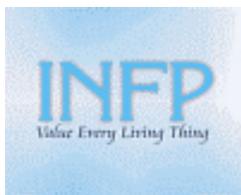


We can all write our names with either hand, but using our preferred hand makes the task simple, fast, and almost unconscious while using our non-preferred hand makes it difficult, slow, and awkward. It's the same with our “preferred” vs. our “non-preferred” attitudes and functions. Type doesn't pretend to be a *complete* description of one's personality, but it does give some fascinating personal insights.

What are functions and attitudes?



Function: A psychic mechanism for receiving or interpreting data. Feeling, Thinking, iNtuition and Sensing are the four functions. Each person is predisposed to perceive and to respond to stimuli based on one of 16 combinations of these 4 functions. The individual's primary function is called the dominant function, auxiliary is secondary, tertiary is third, and inferior fourth. (See [functional Analysis](#) for more information.)



Attitude: The direction that a function focuses on, either *Extraverted* or *Introverted* (see above).

What do the letters mean?



E -- Extraverted: turned toward the outer world, of people and things. An extravert, or extraverted type, is one whose dominant function is focused in an external direction. Extraverts are inclined to express themselves, using their primary function, directly.



I -- Introverted: turned toward the inner world of symbols, ideals and forms. An introvert, or introverted type, is one whose dominant function is inwardly focused. Introverts are inclined to express themselves, using their primary function, indirectly, through inference and nuance.

N -- iNtuition: "Unconscious perceiving." Intuition involves the recognition of patterns, the perception of the abstract; it is a visionary sense. Extraverted intuition perceives the patterns and possibilities of life. Introverted intuition compares the "rightness" of real-world circumstances with that which is ideal. In Jung's typology, intuition is an irrational function. Intuition's opposite function is Sensing.



S -- Sensing: physiological perception; perceiving with the five natural senses. Extraverted sensors are attuned to the world of sights, sounds, smells, touches and tastes. Introverted sensors are most aware of how those perceptions compare with their ideal internal standards. In Jung's typology, sensing is an irrational function. Sensing's opposite is iNtuition.



T -- Thinking: Making decisions impersonally. In Jung's typology, thinking is a rational function. Thinking's opposite is Feeling.

F -- Feeling: Making decisions from a personal perspective. In Jung's typology, feeling is a rational function. Feeling's opposite is Thinking.



P stands for **Perceiving**, **J** for **Judging**. For the E types, it's simple enough - P means that the dominant function is a Perceiving function (iNtuition or Sensing); J means the dominant function is a deciding or Judging function. For Introverts, it's just the opposite. P actually means that the extraverted function is a Perceiving (data-collecting, or irrational) function, but since the dominant function is introverted (by definition for Introverts), the I _ _ P types' first functions are Judging (deciding or rational) functions.

Confusing? All theory aside, just remember that **J** types show the world their decision-making Judging function and **P** types display the more open-ended perceiving, data-collecting function.



So how do I find out what my type is? Is there a test?



The *MBTI*® is an excellent tool, but you won't find it online. Fortunately, JLab employees can take the *MBTI*® itself, coupled with a full interpretation. We have a certified *MBTI*® administrator on our staff, Bruce Ullman, the Lab's Training and Performance Manager. Bruce has administered the instrument to



dozens of JLab people, both individually and in the context of their workgroup. In fact, if your group would like to set up a special session to explore not only individual types but also how you interact with your customers and each other, give him a call at x7170 or [email](#) him.



If you want to try your hand at self-analysis, there are, among others, the online version of the [Keirsey Temperament Sorter](#), and the new [Keirsey Character Sorter](#). These were developed from the work of Myers and Briggs by British researchers David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates. (You might want to browse this link about [personality assessment](#) before drawing any conclusions about the results.)



Links

[TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION](#) has useful insights on how to improve your communication based on the type you are and the type of the person with whom you're communicating

[16 PERSONALITY TYPES ON THE JOB](#) has a page for each of the 16 types with links to things like a descriptive profile of the type, what careers are most appropriate for them, strengths and weaknesses in a work setting, how they work best, etc