

## Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Your Career

If everyone did what they were meant to do, people would be happier in their careers and more productive. This makes perfect sense, so why are most people unhappy in their careers? There are a lot of possible reasons for this - following in the family business, trying to emulate Michael Douglas' Wall Street notoriety, or simply doing what your best buddy does for a living.

But there is one problem with this - we are all different. Doing what a parent, an idol, or a friend do may be fine for them, but not for you.

How then, do you determine what the best choice is for you?

Imagine having a crystal ball that allows you to approach life's decisive crossroads knowing beforehand what will work for you and what will not? This will not only increase your chances of being successful, it will make you a whole lot happier.

One proven method for determining this is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment. MBTI is a tool designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. Applying MBTI assessment results to decisions such as choosing a college major or planning a career will enable choices congruent with your personality.

Just starting out? Great - take an MBTI assessment - then be happy and be successful for the rest of your life. But what about that majority of people stuck in a less than desirable career? For starters, just knowing and understanding your personality type can help you discover and use your strengths to achieve better results in situations that are sub-optimally matched to your personality, but should you find yourself in an unsatisfactory job longer than you can endure, it is time to take a new direction and choose the path that best aligns with you.

### MBTI

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is an outgrowth of Carl Jung's 1921 typological theory that our personality consists of two pair of cognitive functions - the rational functions of Thinking and Feeling, and the irrational functions of Sensing and Intuition. The renowned Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology further suggested that we express these functions in either introverted or extraverted form.

Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, when developing a personality inventory during World War II to help women find wartime jobs in which they would be most comfortable and most effective, added a fourth dimension of how people relate to the outside world (Judging and Perceiving). This inventory eventually grew into the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, first published in 1962.

MBTI believes that people are either born with or develop certain preferred ways of thinking and acting, and sorts these psychological differences into four opposite pairs, or dichotomies. From this, 16 possible psychological types emerge, with no single type considered superior or inferior to the others. The MBTI theory is that people naturally prefer one of the sixteen combinations.

Letter combinations are used to reference each of the 16 types.<sup>1</sup> For example, an extraverted individual with psychological preferences to sensing, thinking and judging is referred to as ESTJ.

### Attitudes (I vs. E)

Within MBTI, the terms introvert and extravert take on a particular significance, as opposed to the everyday associations of quiet and shy versus party animal and know-it-all.

- ▶ Introverts build energy through reflection, and typically channel this through a repetitive cycle of reflection, action, and re-reflection. They often need a break in action in order to rebuild energy.
- ▶ Extraverts build energy through action, and typically channel this through a repetitive cycle of action, reflection, and further action. When extraverts become inactive, their levels of energy and motivation decline.

### Functions (S vs. N and T vs. F)

Sensing and Intuition describe how we understand and interpret information:

- ▶ Sensing personalities trust information that exists and is tangible, and distrust following a hunch.
- ▶ Intuitive personalities are more comfortable following instinct and working with information that is more abstract and theoretical.

Thinking and Feeling are decision-making functions. Both personalities strive to make rational choices using the data from their information-gathering functions, but differ in how they approach their decision:

- ▶ Thinkers prefer to make decisions from the outside-looking-in; they approach decisions from a detached standpoint, and often apply logic, consistency, and rules or principles.
- ▶ Feelers have a propensity to come to decisions by aligning themselves with the circumstances; they empathize with the situation by examining from the inside.

The 16 Types			
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ

### Lifestyle (J vs. P)

To the personality traits championed by Jung, Briggs Myers hypothesized that people have a preference in whether they relate their Judging function (T or F) or their Perceiving function (S or N) to the outside world, i.e., one function is more evident.

- ▶ Judges lead with their thinking or feeling traits (T or F).
- ▶ Perceivers lead with their sensing and intuitive traits (S or N).



The following table lists several high-level characteristics and career examples aligned with each personality type.

### Putting it All Together

Type	Characterization	U.S. Pop.	Sample Careers		Notable Examples
ISTJ	Serious, dutiful, quiet.	11.6%	Accounting Dental	Technical Mathematics	George H.W. Bush Jackie Joyner-Kersey
ISFJ	Sympathetic, loyal, considerate, diligent.	13.8%	Nursing Teaching	Social Work Paralegal	Barbara Bush Michael Jordan
ESTJ	Go-getter, decisive.	8.7%	Law Enforcement Government	Underwriting Military	Sam Walton Rev. Billy Graham
ESFJ	Helper, host, harmonizer.	12.3%	Office Management Speech Pathology	Nursing Teaching	Bill Clinton Sally Field
ISTP	Logical, flexible, action-oriented.	5.4%	Carpentry Dental Hygiene	Mechanical Athletics	Clint Eastwood Chuck Yeager
ISFP	Pleasant, reserved, kind.	8.8%	Secretarial Therapy	Medical Food Service	Dan Rather Kevin Costner
ESTP	Promoter, action oriented, outgoing, realistic, sensible.	4.3%	Sales / Marketing Entrepreneurial	Law Enforcement Transportation	Michael J. Fox Madonna
ESFP	Entertaining, friendly, outgoing, fun-loving.	8.5%	Receptionist Coach	Design Childcare	Bob Hope Goldie Hawn
INFJ	Future oriented, mystical, inspiring.	1.5%	Psychiatry Religious	Science Entertainment	Oprah Winfrey Billy Crystal
INFP	Dreamer, idealist.	4.3%	Journalism Writing	Counseling Psychology	Tom Brokaw Julia Roberts
ENFJ	Visionary, smooth talker, persuader, lively, enthusiastic.	2.4%	Music Consulting	Acting Religious	Bob Saget Ross Perot
ENFP	Initiator, energizer, enthusiast.	8.1%	Entertainment Social Science	Journalism Counseling	Bill Cosby Robin Williams
INTJ	Free thinker, enricher.	2.1%	Programming Research	Legal Engineering	Peter Jennings Maria Shriver
INTP	Questions everything.	3.3%	Biology Legal	Chemistry Photography	Gerald Ford Meryl Streep
ENTJ	Natural leader, achiever, decisive.	1.8%	Legal Consulting	Administration Public Office	Newt Gingrich Dave Letterman
ENTP	Innovator, independent, adaptable.	3.2%	Engineering Public Relations	Photography Journalism	Sir Walter Raleigh Alexander the Great

MBTI is by far the most popular personality evaluative tool. Universities use it in career counseling to guide students into appropriate fields, and businesses use it to make hiring decisions, identify leadership potential, design training, facilitate team building, and resolve employee conflicts.

Tests are freely available on-line. Form M, with 93 measures, is the most popular version. Ensure that websites appear reputable before basing life decisions on the results, and should you opt instead for a physical forum, note that practitioners must be licensed to facilitate and interpret MBTI assessments, so select accordingly.

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1. To avoid two letters using "I", Intuition is assigned the letter "N," leaving "I" to represent Introvert.